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Letters to the Editor

'A response to "S.A. Bolliger, S. Ross, L. Oesterhelweg, M.J. Thali, B.P. Kneubuehl, Are full or empty beer bottles sturdier and does their fracture-threshold suffice to break the human skull?" [J Forensic Leg Med 16 (2009) 138–142]'

The authors provided in their paper interesting experimental data on the breaking energy of full or empty beer bottles. Full bottles broke at 30 J impact energy, empty bottles at 40 J. The conclusion of the authors is that the breaking energies surpass the minimum fracture-threshold of the human neurocranium and therefore beer bottles are capable of breaking human calvaria. In relation to these interesting experimental findings experiences from forensic casework and experimental biomechanical investigations published some years ago shall be recalled.^{1,2} Skull fractures resulting from blows to the head with glass bottles can be considered as rare events. Although in the literature cases of fatal depressed fractures in the skull caused by blows with glass bottles are described they are in the own case material rare events. Skull fractures were observed only in 2 of 10 fatal cases and the cause of death was not related to mechanical damage of bone or brain in any circumstances (e.g. comminuted skull fractures or severe cerebral contusions). Under experimental conditions, no skull fractures could be produced in 20 postmortem experiments with corpses. In a total number of 30 cases (authentic cases plus experimental setting) skull fractures were only present in two cases. These observations and experimental findings may be also of relevance when expert evidence is given at court.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

References

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Condom-murder?

Dear Editor,

We read with interest the article entitled 'Condom-murder' by Murty¹ in the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*. The article¹ deals with six cases that are dubbed as 'condom-murder'. In the 'discussion' section, Murty¹ has listed the evidence which could potentially be derived from a condom discovered at a crime site. However, Murty¹ has not provided any information regarding the same in the six cases reported by him. Moreover, the circumstances of death as understood by us from the glumly presented case reports appear not to be the same, and therefore, it is unacceptable to club all of them under the inappropriate blanket of 'condom-murder'. In case 1, the presence of an unused condom

in the pocket of the deceased discovered at autopsy is a mere coincidental finding and is of no significance related to the circumstances of the case. The cases 1, 2, 5 and 6 show that adultery as a reason to murder is not uncommon. The preferred contraception was condom in cases of adultery and is a reasonable and logical choice. It is obvious that condoms were recovered at the crime sites and not any other form of contraception. The cases 3 and 4 suggest rape followed by murder. The christening of the six cases¹ as 'condom-murder' is debatable as it is not supported by the data presented and needs further elucidation.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Reference

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Reply to the letter “Cadaveric fungi: Not yet an established forensic tool – Authors response”

Dear Editor,

At the outset we² are sorry to say that the authors¹ in the article “Cadaveric fungi: Not yet an established forensic tool – Authors response” have not taken our views² in a right and challenging scientific spirit, instead has raised damaging remarks on the authors.² The same caution should have been taken care by Menezes et al. in his article³, when the authors³ have loosely commented on the work and questioned on the validity of the study done by Hitosugi et al.⁴ The authors³ have prematurely commented that “the use of cadaveric fungi as a forensic tool in estimating time since death at autopsy as reported in the case by Hitosugi et al. may not be applicable without any appropriate reasoning”, which is very dishonorable statement to the forensic scientists,⁴ though the authors⁴ have scientifically substantiated their work leaving concluding remarks stating that “further researchers should be needed to clarify the successive colonization of fungi on human cadavers”. We² request the authors¹ to once again leisurely, go through the article written by Hitosugi et al.^{4,5}

Menezes et al. has “alleged” in his article¹ that we² have underestimated *Forensic Entomology*, which is very untrue and hence request the editorial team to verify the same and not to encourage the authors¹ to write loosely, just for the sake of publication. We have indeed mentioned in our article² that “It is a well known fact among the Forensic learned professionals that Forensic Entomology, though it is a well established science that helps in estimation of postmortem interval, it too has its own limitations like, where the postmortem interval cannot be ascertained when only skeletal remains or mummified remains have been recovered^{2,4} or when the body has been recovered from bottom of the well⁴ or buried under earth⁵... in those circumstances the Forensic Pathologist with the help of Environmental and Medical Mycologist can utilize the stage and biological type of fungal growth as a corroborative evidence in estimating the time since death.” So where stands the question of underestimating Forensic Entomology.

The views expressed in the article¹ is discouraging not only to us², but to the entire forensic investigators and readers. The truth should be accepted, regarded and debated scientifically. Hence we² put forth with a request to the learned editorial team to warn such authors, who degrade the views and work done by other scientist, with out having substantial research experience in that field, and in turn to encourage and respect the current budding scientific views. It is very disappointing to learn that, the author's¹ response

which was purely dishonoring has been encouraged and the basic importance of the Cadaveric Fungi as a tool in estimating time since death⁴ has been totally corned and strangled.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to be declared.

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